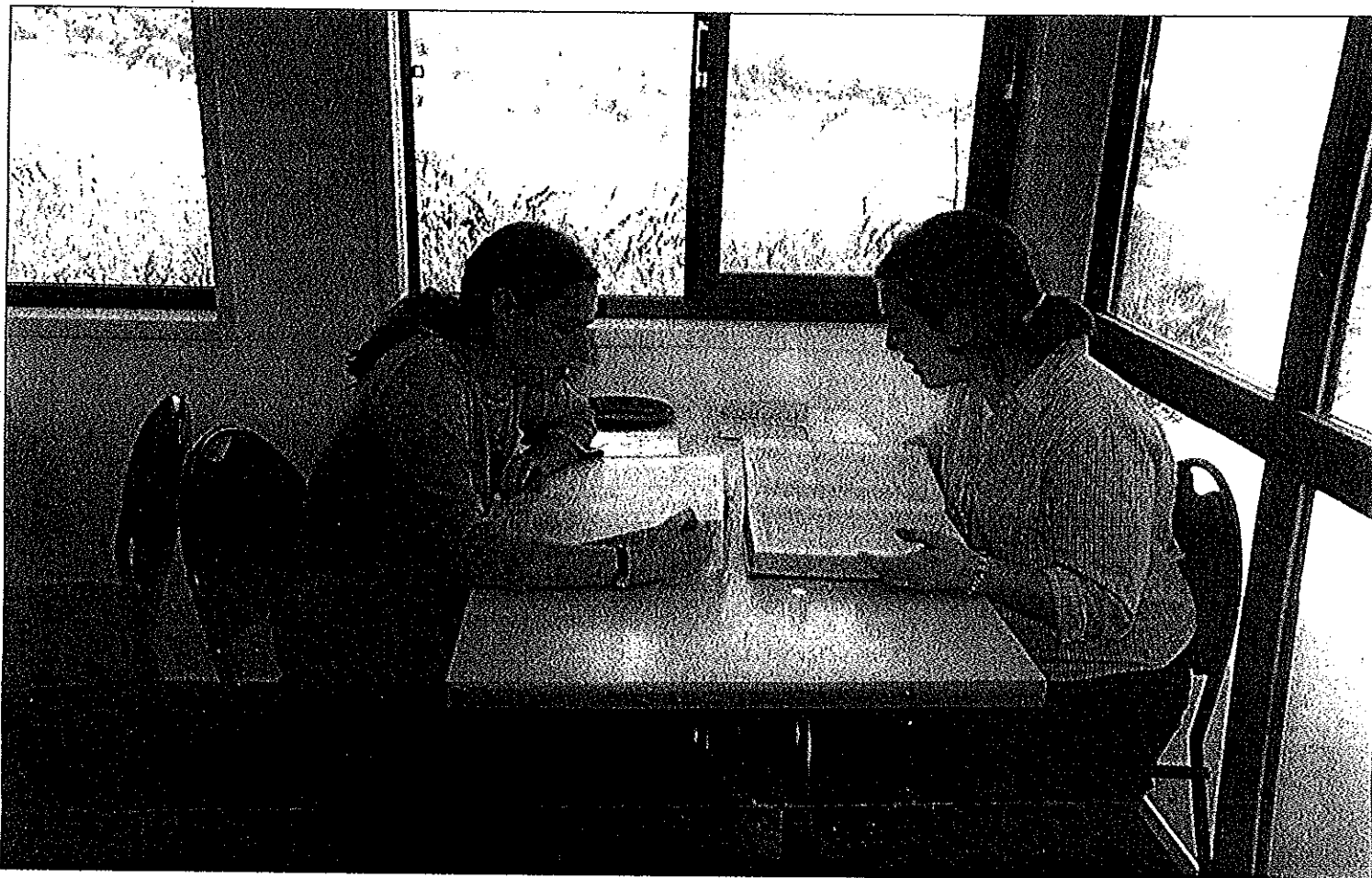


# A Beit Midrash Of One's Own

In fruitful summer partnerships, young women learn.



The Drisha Summer High School program provided the author, right, the chance to study chavruta style. Her partners opened her mind "wider than ever seemed possible."

**By Elisheva Shulman**

Ever since I was a young girl, I have had a tremendous feeling of awe for the beit midrash (house or room of study). As a child, I remember watching my father, sitting across from my grandfather, learn in the beit midrash in our living room. Each one of them was leaning over a sefer (Hebrew book) with all of those gigantic, old sefarim (Hebrew books) surrounding them. To me, the sefarim held some kind of deep secret that only those who knew how to read them could understand. I yearned for the day when I would be privileged to uncover the secret.

As I grew older, the sefarim continued to inspire me, but my feeling of awe changed form as the ancient books occasionally could be found in my own hands. I began to realize that the sefarim held chazzal (the early sages) within them. The beit midrash was

the place where all of my great-grandparents and their teachers congregated, a place with a historic significance, representing all that had come before us and all that continues to exist within us. More recently in high school, I have been able to further develop my appreciation for the passing down of tradition.

The sefarim on the shelves have become my own teachers. Not only do I learn the details of our laws and customs from them, but I also work to understand the reasons behind the rich practices of our tradition. My studies have enabled me to connect the sefarim in the beit midrash to the way that I lead my life on a daily basis. No longer do I perform mitzvot passively, unaware of their meaning or why I perform them. I now can explain the intricacies and developments of the many religious procedures that I follow.

Last summer I participated in the Drisha Summer High School Program. During that time, I was able to learn in a beit midrash with women from all different backgrounds and places, surrounded by our ever-growing collection of teachings. The Drisha beit midrash provided an atmosphere that recreated for me the images of my parents' teachers and sefarim.

However, this time I was able to receive the teachers as my own in a way that I had not yet done before. Not only was I privileged to study under some of the great Torah minds of today, I also was able to learn side by side with the Torah leaders of tomorrow. Through the chavruta (partner) style of learning that preceded every class, I was able to hear different perspectives from my friends, which opened my mind wider than ever seemed possible.

As I look back at my summer, I realize that there are still hundreds of sefarim that sit on the shelves of the beit midrash that I have not yet opened. The Drisha summer program gave me inspiration to learn more. I now have a deeper appreciation both for the massiveness of the learning enterprise, as well as for my own capability of understanding complicated texts such as a Gemara or a Meiri (commentary of the Gemara). The doors of learning have been opened for me and now I know my way around the room — but I also know that this is only the beginning. ■



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**SCHOOL'S OUT**